Touchpc blows away paperwork for air products cylinder delivery

Business

Air Products plc is a truly international business, with 100, 000 customers in the British Isles alone.

The company supplies thousands of gases to the medical, educational, industrial, leisure and foods sectors. Gases can be supplied in bulk or cylinder form. With a scale of operation such as this, Air Products needed a trustworthy and connective solution to eliminate paperwork and simplify their cylinder delivery operations. They decided to use hardware and software provided by TouchStar Technologies. A typical delivery round consists of pre-round checks, the delivery and collection of empty cylinders and post-round stock reconciliation. The day starts at the depot with the driver picking up his TouchPC which has been loaded with the details of that day's deliveries.

He can then check the actual load on the vehicle against his TouchPC's record, and any differences can be fixed there and then. Because the system has access to a database containing the full weight of every type of gas cylinder, it will also be able to alert the driver if the load exceeds the legal transportation limits. The driver then sets off on the delivery round. On arrival at a customer's location, he will know from the TouchPC exactly what each order contains. He will then scan the cylinders' barcodes with the TouchPC's integrated scanner or enter the codes manually, before wheeling the cylinders into place.

Occasionally a customer will have a request that exceeds the planned amount. As long as the vehicle is carrying enough stock, the customer's request will be granted and the system will be updated; the driver will

receive a warning if the revised order will adversely affect the rest of the day's deliveries. Next, any empties will be removed for re-use. The number of empties might not be known at the start of the shift, so their records need to be scanned or entered into the TouchPC. If the cylinder ID is not clear, a description can be found by using the system's search function, which looks within its database for IDs or names.

The system will again alert the driver if the weight limit or available space is exceeded as a result of the empties. The collection of empties complete, the driver will then need proof of delivery. The details of the delivery pop up on the screen of the TouchPC, and the customer will confirm the transaction by signing the screen. A signed delivery ticket is then printed out using the integrated printer and given to the customer, and the delivery is complete. This ticket is digitised and its contents will be sent to the back office for their own billing and other records.

At any point, a report of the vehicle's load status can be called up, along with that day's delivery history and details of the following drops. Back at the depot, all the day's data is loaded onto the main system and any discrepancies will be sorted out at this point. Because each cylinder has its own unique code, the progress and history of any cylinder can be tracked on a daily basis. It is therefore possible to keep a close eye on batches and to know exactly where any cylinder is or was at a given time.